

April 9, 2021

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee

I write to you today on behalf of Catholic Charities of Oregon in support of SB 5505, and the inclusion of \$250 million for affordable housing and \$50 million for permanent supportive housing in Article XI-Q General Obligation bonds.

Our mission is to assure that essential, life-saving services and support are accessible to the most vulnerable Oregonians. In addition to affordable and supportive housing, the services we provide across the state of Oregon also include financial empowerment, mental health & counseling, pregnancy and parenting support, legal services, intensive case management and more.

A safe and stable place to call home is a basic human need.

Prior to the COVID pandemic, Oregon was already experiencing a housing crisis, and too many of our neighbors and community members were experiencing housing instability. In the 2019-20 school year, over 21,000 kids experienced homelessness at some point during the year, with their families. Due to COVID and the early closure of schools, we know this is likely an undercount.

Since 2015, the Legislature has committed millions in general obligation bonds to the LIFT program, and over 3,600 affordable homes have been or are being built. These homes are being built in communities across Oregon – Newport to Ontario, Klamath Falls to Astoria, Roseburg, Hermiston, Eugene, Bend, Redmond, and Sisters, and everywhere in between. With additional resources, we can support more of this work and build projects across Oregon to provide safe and stable places to call home for members of our communities.

We need to continue to fund these efforts. The implications of increasing homelessness are dire.

Evictions, foreclosures, and other collection debts can stay on someone's credit report for as long as seven years, impacting their ability to secure new housing, finance cars or even get a job. The life span of a person experiencing homelessness is greatly decreased due to trauma, insufficient hygiene, and inability to manage chronic health conditions. At Catholic Charities of Oregon, we work closely with clients who go through unfortunate and often traumatic experiences like these. Our Homeless and Housing Services team knows all too well that the proposed bill and inclusion of funding are desperately needed by Oregonians across the state. Our clients, and people with similar stories, need a chance to avoid these situations and have the opportunity to work towards safe and stable housing.

We urge your support for the inclusion of \$250 million for affordable housing and \$50 million for permanent supportive housing in Article XI-Q General Obligation bonds in SB 5505.

Thank you for your time and for your service to the State of Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Travis Phillips', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Travis Phillips  
Director of Community Development & Housing  
Catholic Charities of Oregon